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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 LAGOS 000112

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STATE FOR AF/W  
STATE FOR INR/AA  
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK  
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR  
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH  
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: OBASANJO ADVISOR'S GLOOMY ASSESSMENT OF THE  
PRESIDENTIAL RACE

REF: LAGOS 48

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (S) Summary: In a January 30 meeting with the Consul General, Special Presidential Advisor and former Minister of State for Defense Lawal Batagarawa gave a gloomy assessment of electoral politics and the presidential race. Batagarawa predicted generalized unrest in the North should People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Umaru Yar'Adua best All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) candidate Muhammadu Buhari in the presidential race. Assessing the candidates, Batagarawa deemed Buhari and Yar'Adua as the wrong men at the wrong time--both too parochial, prone to arrogance and too impersonal. Batagarawa assessed Atiku a more adept politician and potentially a better statesman than the two frontrunners, but without a realistic chance of winning. Batagarawa felt the leaders of the PDP national campaign organization were so power-craven that they might attempt to manipulate the vote to engineer a massive PDP electoral victory at the local and state as well as national level. He warned of a massive political collision should Buhari be able to unite aggrieved oppositionists against such electoral larceny. End summary.

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Race Narrows to Buhari and Yar'Adua,  
but Concerns About the Two Increase  
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12. (S) In a January 30 conversation with the Consul General, former Minister of State for Defense and current Special Presidential Advisor Lawal Batagarawa (strictly protect) painted a gloomy assessment of national electoral politics. Batagarawa foresaw potential generalized unrest resulting from the presidential campaign. Batagarawa narrowed the race to two candidates, Umaru Yar'Adua of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Muhammadu Buhari of the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP). Although Batagarawa considered Atiku Abubakar of the Action Congress (AC) as the most gifted of the major candidates, Batagarawa did not give Atiku a ray of hope of

winning due to the alignment of political and governmental forces against him.

13. (S) For the astute and studious Batagarawa, neither Yar'Adua nor Buhari filled the prescription for what Nigeria needed in its next president. Batagarawa sensed Nigeria needed someone with considerable conciliatory powers in order to salve the bruises afflicted on the body politic during President Obasanjo's years of brusque stewardship. He felt the next president also needed to have the vision and intellectual expanse to deal with the Niger Delta, overall economic reform and a reformulation of Nigerian foreign policy. He saw Buhari and Yar'Adua as wanting in the balance.

14. (S) Batagarawa described Yar'Adua and Buhari as parochial and narrow-minded, both lacking the breadth of intellectual interest to govern a country as complex as Nigeria. Batagarawa portrayed both the Yar'Adua and Buhari campaigns as controlled by political unsophisticates more adept at confrontational politics and much less adept at knowing how to steer such a sluggish vessel as Nigeria in the proper direction.

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PDP Controlled by Dangerous  
Political and Financial Interests  
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15. (S) Batagarawa had little positive to say about his own party, the PDP. Batagarawa said the PDP erred in selecting the leadership of the national campaign. By placing Bode George as National Campaign Chairman, President Obasanjo as the Vice-Chairman, and Ahmadu Ali as third in command, Batagarawa said the PDP has signaled that its intention to dominate the election. The reality of the vote tabulation

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would be of secondary concern, and a likely casualty, in the pursuit of this cardinal objective, he surmised. The former Minister claimed that neither George nor Ali met a compromise they could understand, made a concession they actually honored, nor eschewed a fight when they believed they occupied a battlefield's high ground. Of the three men, Obasanjo was actually the most reasonable and flexible, remarked Batagarawa.

16. (S) Batagarawa argued that, with this trio in charge, the PDP would try to claim almost every national, state and local election. The PDP national leadership are fierce competitors who would not be sated with just remaining the majority or governing party. Their appetite grows with eating. They will attempt to consume almost everything, he warned.

17. (S) Financially, he felt that the PDP will ultimately be handsomely endowed because of the contributions of well-connected businessmen, led by Nigeria's richest person Aliko Dangote, and oil man Femi Odetola. Batagarawa saw this influx of cash as dangerous, commenting this gang of business moguls had already secured its tentacles around Yar'Adua. Batagarawa likened this clique to the economic equivalent of the PDP leadership triumvirate. The goal of these actors was to become the country's new economic elite and to control the commanding heights of the national economy with the side-effect of scuppering their economic competition, explained Batagarawa.

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Yar'Adua Unable to Lead, Prone to Arrogance  
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18. (S) Dealing with this complex of forces and personalities would test the dexterity of even the strongest candidate. Batagarawa gauged Yar'Adua as lacking the strength of personality and intellectual gravitas to maneuver the party toward a more moderate course. Yar'Adua has also been

afflicted with arrogance and hubris, lamented Batagarawa.

¶9. (S) For example, Yar'Adua made a tactical blunder when he visiting former Head of State Ibrahim Babangida at his Minna home, Batagarawa recounted. Prudence would have cautioned Yar'Adua to assumed the posture of a "junior brother" asking his more accomplished elder "sibling" for help and support. Instead, Yar'Adua arrived in a presidential jet and was met by a cavalcade of vehicles and attendants. He projected himself like a conqueror at an equal status with Babangida, a move which rankled the former Head of State, according to the ex-Minister. This is one of the reasons Babangida is entertaining a dalliance with Buhari, assessed Batagarawa.

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Yar'Adua Troubled in His Own Backyard  
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¶10. (S) Batagarawa, a native of Katsina, as is Yar'Adua and Buhari, recalled that Yar'Adua kicked a hornet's nest when he engineered the Katsina PDP gubernatorial nomination toward his cousin Ibrahim Shema. National Assembly Speaker Aminu Masari wanted the post. Because of the ensuing conflict, Batagarawa was attempting to arrange a meeting with Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Masari. Batagarawa's objective would be to get Shema to withdraw in favor of Masari or a person of Masari's choosing. If not, Batagarawa predicted the PDP in Katsina would be a house hotly divided on election day.

¶11. (S) Yar'Adua was not universally liked in Katsina State because of his reputation for duplicity, Batagarawa offered. Yar'Adua has a Hausa nickname which roughly translated to "the deceiver", revealed Batagarawa. At one point, Batagarawa related, Katsina citizens were so irate at the Governor a mob went to his mother's house to kidnap her or do worse. It took the intervention of traditional rulers to dissuade the crowd. In addition, Yar'Adua's wife Turai was believed to have inordinate influence over the Governor, Batagarawa stated.

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Buhari Plagued by Narrow Focus and Overdelegation  
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¶12. (S) However, Batagarawa no longer saw Buhari as a better solution. After having studied Buhari's stint as head of state and having spent time with Buhari and aides more recently, Batagarawa has downgraded his opinion of Buhari. Showing his lack of political aplomb, the General had failed to take advantage of the PDP's missteps, contended Batagarawa. Buhari, Batagarawa opined, had poor advisors with little national perspective. Batagarawa characterized Buhari as someone with great determination but limited interests. Thus, Buhari tended to delegate too much and often remained aloof from matters that did not capture his interest but which nonetheless were important.

¶13. (S) Batagarawa has also studied Buhari's term as Chairman of the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF). As Chairman of the PTF, Buhari placed a lot of trust in northern consultants in granting contracts to them but failed to monitor these consultants adequately. Despite Buhari's martinet reputation, the consultants took advantage of the lax situation, maintained Batagarawa. (Note: Buhari ran the PTF from 1996 until 2000 when Obasanjo shut it down. End note)

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Atiku the Most Capable of the "Big Three", but Had No Chance of Winning  
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¶14. (S) Ironically, despite his troubles with Obasanjo and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Atiku was the best politician of the three, assessed Batagarawa.

Atiku's personality allowed him to relate with people of differing regions and faiths. In contrast, Buhari and Yar'Adua were semi-reclusive and did not have cosmopolitan outlooks, Batagarawa felt. Despite his personal integrity lapses, Atiku would likely do better managing the economy than the other two. However, Batagarawa acknowledged Atiku's chances were negligible as Obasanjo would launch apoplectic at even the hint of an Atiku victory.

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Yar'Adua Likely to Win, but a Buhari  
Protest Could Have a Significant Impact  
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¶15. (S) In the end, Batagarawa predicted the PDP would do whatever necessary for a Yar'Adua victory, but Buhari and his camp would protest and do so with vigor. A Buhari protest would have a significant impact if Buhari could join forces with other actors around the country. If this happened, Nigeria could face national unrest and instability, Batagarawa warned. Whether other forces, such as the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) in the Southeast or the AC in the Southwest join Buhari would be a function of how much the PDP tried to manipulate state and local elections in those regions, predicted Batagarawa.

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Comment  
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¶16. (S) Batagarawa, who was closely involved in the PDP presidential selection process, was never keen on Yar'Adua and has soured noticeably Buhari. Batagarawa's prediction of unrest and possible violence after the election is a legitimate concern. The fillip for this unrest, in the former Minister's calculations, would be the PDP's determination to claim many more electoral victories than the actual voting totals warranted. This assumes an election where there will be considerable misconduct. We tend to agree with Batagarawa that the likelihood of unrest in Southern Nigeria increases the more the outcome in the state and local elections here do not seem to reflect the votes as

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actually cast. End comment.

BROWNE